

Questions answered:

We hear a lot about “leadership.” What exactly does that really mean? Can you give some examples of what it would look like to have the “leadership” you speak of?

Some of the information used to develop this answer was gathered from the Barriers Study Report prepared by Praxis Consulting Group, LLC – Reno regarding the issue of leadership on affordable housing: http://praxisreno.com/Resources/Barriers_Report_9_14_final.pdf

Perhaps the most commonly cited barrier by participants was the lack of leadership on the issue of affordable housing in the community. Respondents commented that affordability did not appear to be a high priority among public officials and high-level staff, when competing against other pressing issues such as downtown redevelopment, tourism, business development, regional growth and annexation, and water availability.

Traditionally, the issue of affordable housing has been addressed through the Washoe County HOME Consortium and the Inter-Local Agreements between Reno, Sparks and Washoe County that were forged in creating the Consortium. A number of respondents, including interviewees who are members of the Technical Review Committee (TRC), which acts in an advisory capacity to the Consortium, thought that the TRC and the Consortium is not currently empowered to take a leadership role on affordable housing in the community. They saw the Consortium as solely a vehicle for distributing the annual allocations of HUD HOME and state Housing Trust Funds.

Interviewees saw a need for leadership on housing at higher levels of government, and among top management within the jurisdictions. As one person observed, “planning and community development staff should be evaluated based upon their performance in expanding affordable housing opportunities. It should be part of their annual job review.” Respondents also expressed concern that the issues of affordable housing have a “seat at the table” as local leaders address other development barriers, such as land, water, and zoning.

The report also cited examples from other jurisdictions: Silicon Valley Leadership Group and Envision Utah, and includes case studies of these efforts in the appendix.

It seems like there is growing concern about this issue among public officials, compared to 10 years ago, which is great. However, we have not yet seen new resources being brought to the table to create more affordable housing or new public agency staff being tasked with addressing affordable housing issues. Many jurisdictions have housing departments that are focused solely on housing issues and coordinate zoning, code enforcement and community development activities in a strategic way to promote availability and affordability of housing.

How long are the waiting lists for the low-income units discussed by the final panelist?

The Nevada Housing Division 2015 Taking Stock Report includes a long discussion of waiting lists.

See: <http://housing.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/housingnv.gov/content/Public/2015TakingStockForum.pdf> page 24-28.

This report was prepared over a year ago. The housing market in Washoe County has tightened considerably since that time. See also the 3rd quarter apartment survey prepared by Johnson, Perkins & Griffen: <http://jpgnv.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Q3-ApartmentSurvey2016.pdf>.

This does not discuss waiting lists, but does indicate that median rents have topped \$1,000 for the first time in history and that vacancy rates are at an all time low. Waiting lists are sure to be increasing across all types of housing in this environment.

Should market rate housing be encouraged downtown to create a center where disposable income is high enough to support business growth? Is it best to disperse affordable housing throughout the City, rather than concentrate it in only a few areas?

Nationally, market-rate housing is a proven catalyst to downtown revitalization. Building a critical mass of people with disposable income is crucial to attract and support a health and vibrant downtown economy.

With the exception of industrial uses, a concentration of any type of use can be problematic. When situating affordable housing, it should be done to maximize residents' access to employment, education and health care. Most specifically, affordable housing should be situated on public transportation lines.

Generally, it is not advised to concentrate low income housing in any one area of the City. Low income housing providers typically seek out locations that are near job centers, service providers, and/or transit. Most often these attributes are found in central portions of city. As for Reno's downtown specifically, trying to attract market rate housing is a need, but also it is critical to ensure there are affordable options. A large portion of housing downtown is "affordable" in that it is low cost, but really low quality housing. A good strategy going forward would be to increase the amount of market rate housing in downtown and maintain the number of affordable housing units downtown, which can hopefully be done through elimination of substandard housing and replaced by deed restricted affordable housing.

What would be your suggestion for better presenting our city-owned property inventory to affordable housing developers?

City of Reno staff has discussed this issue in great detail and is in the process of developing a plan to better inform the community of city-owned property inventory. Developing a brochure with property information and creating a website devoted entirely to the City's real property inventory as well as the property disposal process are at the top of the list.

What has been discussed with respect to unwanted consequences of “affordable housing” in higher income areas (consumer-based, bullying, etc.)? Please speak to the integration of affordable housing in existing higher-income areas.

Economic segregation is a major issue in many of larger metro areas in the US. Basically, the more concentrated lower income households are the less likely they are to improve their economic status. Major studies on the effect of the diversity of incomes in a neighborhood on outcomes for children have found the greater the diversity of household incomes in a neighborhood the greater probability that a child will increase its economic status in adulthood. As a result of this research and other efforts, HUD has recently taken a more proactive approach to requiring cities to look for opportunities to increase affordable housing in higher income areas. The benefits of trying to encourage neighborhoods to have a diversity of household types and incomes far outweighs any potential or perceived unwanted consequences.

Please explain charts in first presentation called “Reno Cost-Burdened Households.”

The bar chart on the slide entitled Reno Cost Burdened Households shows the percent of renter households in each income bracket (30% of AMI and below, 30% to 50% of AMI, etc..) that pay more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing (rent).

How do Medicaid programs support housing services for low-income persons?

As taken from the Kaiser Family Foundation’s (a non-profit organization focused on national health issues) website, homelessness is a strong predictor of poor health outcomes. Homelessness and housing instability are also predictors of higher health care costs, due largely to high rates of potentially avoidable hospital admissions. Research on supportive housing suggests that it can have a positive impact on the health of formerly homeless individuals, many of whom are covered or could be covered by Medicaid. The findings from evaluations of various supportive housing programs across the country include improved health status, better mental health outcomes, and reduced substance use among those who gain housing. For example, two studies of housing programs serving individuals living with HIV/AIDS showed significantly higher survival rates among those who obtained supportive housing than among individuals in a control group who did not. Other research has shown reduced emergency department (ED) use and inpatient hospital admissions, as well as reduced Medicaid costs, associated with supportive housing. While these studies have generally been small in scale, they indicate that stable housing and housing-related services and supports for Medicaid beneficiaries may help to advance the aim of improving patient care and population health and lowering per capita health care costs.

Although Medicaid and supportive housing programs serve many of the same people, they have historically operated in separate “silos,” with little if any interaction at the federal, state, or local levels. Medicaid and housing programs each have complex rules and structures and their institutional cultures differ. The federal government and states jointly finance Medicaid, but states design and operate their own programs subject to federal minimum standards. As a result, Medicaid benefits, delivery and payment systems, and other aspects of program design vary widely by state. On the housing side, federal dollars often flow through local governments and public housing agencies to housing providers, adding to the complexity that Medicaid-Housing collaborations may face. Partnerships require the two sectors to gain understanding of each other’s operations and develop new relationships and systems to support coordination.

Besides providing housing for low-income and special needs populations, supportive housing programs provide housing-related services and activities. These include assistance with securing housing and transition support services for individuals being discharged from institutional settings to the community, and health-related services, such as helping residents obtain and maintain Medicaid coverage, coordinating their care, and providing health education and wellness programs. In cross-sector initiatives that integrate Medicaid and housing, the whole that results may be greater than the sum of the parts. Providing Medicaid coverage and payment for health- and housing-related services otherwise financed with housing dollars can augment housing programs’ capacity to address housing needs; in addition, state Medicaid spending for these services and activities increases the funds available for assistance for supportive housing clients and residents. Integration of Medicaid and housing may also foster the mutually reinforcing positive effects of safe, stable housing and access to health care for the vulnerable populations who need both.

More info can be found at <http://kff.org/report-section/linking-medicaid-and-supportive-housing-issue-brief/>

What controls the annual increase in rent in my affordable housing apartment at City Center Apartments?

If City Center apartments are indeed affordable (i.e. were constructed or rehabilitated with HOME and/or Low Income Housing Tax Credits - LIHTC), then the rents are restricted to what the programs allow. HOME rent limits are published each year by HUD, and property managers are bound to use them. LIHTC rent limits are also published each year by HUD and are controlled by HUD as well. The income limits for both programs can be found at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2016/2016summary.odn>

Des Craig, City of Reno
Denise Cox, Nevada State Housing Division

The HOME property tax exemption really concerns me. How do we attract people who are really serving the people that are really in need of affordable housing?

Developers can claim property tax exemption on affordable rental units if they have spent federal dollars in the construction or rehabilitation of the affordable units. This is a state incentive to encourage affordable housing development using federal dollars. The relevant state statute is inserted below. The above question implies that the tax exemption does not encourage the development of affordable housing. I cannot comment except to say that there would be less affordable rental units in the Truckee Meadows region without the tax exemption provision. Other incentives are of course possible but would require legislative support at state and local levels.

NRS 361.082 Exemption of portions of qualified low-income housing projects.

1. That portion of real property and tangible personal property which is used for housing and related facilities for persons with low incomes is exempt from taxation if the portion of property qualifies as a low-income unit and is part of a qualified low-income housing project that is funded in part by federal money appropriated pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 12701 et seq. for the year in which the exemption applies.

2. The portion of a qualified low-income housing project that is entitled to the property tax exemption pursuant to subsection 1 must be determined by dividing the total assessed value of the housing project and the land upon which it is situated into the assessed value of the low-income units and related facilities that are occupied by or used exclusively for persons with low incomes.

3. The Nevada Tax Commission shall, by regulation, prescribe a form for an application for the exemption described in subsection 1. After an original application is filed, the county assessor of the county in which the housing project is located may mail a form for the renewal of the exemption to the owner of the housing project each year following a year in which the exemption was allowed for that project.

4. A renewal form returned to a county assessor must indicate the total number of units in the housing project and the number of units used for housing and related facilities for persons with low incomes. If the owner of a housing project fails to provide a properly completed renewal form to the county assessor of the county in which the project is located by the date required in [NRS 361.155](#), except as otherwise provided in subsection 6 of that section, or fails to qualify for the exemption described in subsection 1, the owner is not entitled to the exemption in the following fiscal year.

5. As used in this section, the terms “low-income unit” and “qualified low-income housing project” have the meanings ascribed to them in 26 U.S.C. § 42.

(Added to NRS by [1991, 1945](#); A [2001, 839](#); [2003, 2749](#); [2007, 1877](#))

Des Craig, City of Reno

What tools are available to create grass-roots affordable housing developments?

Funding tools for the creation of affordable housing are available on both a state and federal level. These include but are not limited to, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, HOME Funds, National Housing Trust Fund, Community Development Block Grants, State Housing Trust Funds, community CDBG funds, community land donation, and private investments. Combining various funding mechanisms and subsidies is the most effective, sustainable way to create affordable housing. Additionally, in order to serve the lowest-income households and individuals with special needs, rental assistance is also needed. Project based vouchers, Shelter Plus Care vouchers, and VASH vouchers are examples of subsidies a developer would try to secure in order to effectively house the neediest populations.

Stacy Jurado-Miller, The Vecino Group

Is there any precedent of using funds and federal programs across state lines?

There are certainly federal programs and funding sources that exist nationally. They are, however, generally administered and allocated on a state by state basis.

Stacy Jurado-Miller, The Vecino Group

Is there a database of housing projects that will “age out” and become market-rate?

The simple answer is no. However, the State of Nevada Housing Division is able to supply limited information on the subject. The Housing Division may be able to craft reports showing when certain projects’ affordability periods end upon request based on the data the Division collects.

Denise Cox, Nevada State Housing Division